Over a million evacuated as super typhoon makes landfall in Philippines

Closure of offices, schools across Manila and other parts of Luzon ordered

MANILA: Super Typhoon Fung-wong slammed into the Philippines' eastern seaboard on Sunday, the national weather service said, after forcing more than a million to evacuate and killing at least two people.

With a radius spanning nearly the entire Philippines, the storm made landfall in Aurora province on the main island of Luzon at 9:10pm (1310 GMT), the state forecaster reported, days after Typhoon Kalmaegi killed 200.

Schools and government offices have been ordered closed on Monday across the main island of Luzon, including the capital Manila, where nearly 300 flights have been cancelled.

Fung-wong is expected to bring wind and heavy rain to swathes of the archipelago nation.

One of the already storm-stricken provinces in the central Philippines recorded the first known death from the new typhoon.

Rescuer Juniel Tagarino in Catbalogan City told AFP the body of a 64-year-old woman attempting to evacuate had been pulled out from under debris and fallen trees. "The wind was so strong and the rain was heavy... According to her family members, she might have forgotten something and went back inside her house," Tagarino said.

The civil defence office later confirmed a second death, a person who drowned in a flash flood on Catanduanes island.

HOUSES are seen amid surging floodwaters as Super Typhoon Fung-wong hit the coast in Pandan, Catanduanes province.—AFP

In Aurora, where the eye of the storm made landfall, government worker Aries Ora was boarding up his home in Dipaculao town with steel sheets and wooden boards. "What really scares us is that the expected landfall is at night," the 34-year-old said.

"Unlike previous typhoons, we won't be able to clearly see the movement of the wind and what's happening around us." Further north, in Cagayan province, people sheltering in an evacuation centre told AFP that fear of flooding had convinced them to leave their homes.

"We often suffer flooding in our home, so when we were told to evacuate, we evacuated, because we would be trapped," said Loretta Salquina.

"The typhoon might blow away our roofs... We're safer here."

'The ground was shaking'

Catanduanes, a small island that the state weather service said could take a "direct hit", was already being lashed by wind and rain early Sunday, with storm surges sending waves hurtling over streets and floodwaters rising in some areas. "The waves started roaring around 7:00 am. When the waves hit the seawall, it felt like the ground was shaking," Edson Casarino, 33, a resident of Catanduanes' Virac town, told AFP.

Video verified by AFP showed a church in the town surrounded by floodwaters that reached halfway up its entrance.

Flooding was also reported in southern Luzon's Bicol region, according to civil defence deputy administrator Rafaelito Alejandro, who later confirmed the preemptive evacuation of nearly 1.2 million people nationwide.

In Guinobatan, a town of about 80,000 in the region's Albay province, verified video showed streets transformed into a raging torrent of floodwaters.

Typhoon Fung-wong is expected to bring at least 200 millimetres (eight inches) of rain to many parts of the country, according to government meteorologists.

Scientists warn that storms are becoming more powerful due to human-driven climate change. Warmer oceans allow typhoons to strengthen rapidly, and a warmer atmosphere holds more moisture, meaning heavier rainfall.

Earlier, Catanduanes rushed to prepare for the onslaught, with residents tying down their houses with ropes and putting weights on their roofs. "They decided to do our tradition of strapping down the roofs with big ropes and anchoring them on the ground, so they won't be blown away by the wind," provincial rescue official Roberto Monterola said.—AFP

BBC boss quits over edited Trump clips

LONDON: The director general of Britain's *BBC*, Tim Davie, and the chief executive of news, Deborah Turness, have resigned following criticism over bias at the corporation, including in the way it allegedly edited a speech by US President Donald Trump.

The Daily Telegraph had reported for days on an internal document produced by a former *BBC* adviser on standards who had listed a raft of errors, including in the way a speech by Trump on January 6, 2021, was edited.

A UK government minister on Sunday described as "incredibly serious" allegations over the way the *BBC* edited clips of US President Donald Trump in a flagship documentary programme.

The comments by Culture, Media and Sport Minister Lisa Nandy came as the broadcaster said its chair Samir Shah would provide an explanation to a parliamentary committee on Monday.

Media outlets, including the *BBC*, reported Sunday that the response was expected to include an apology.

The concerns regard clips spliced together from sections of the US president's speech on Jan 6, 2021 that made it appear he told supporters he was going to walk to the US Capitol with them and "fight like hell".

In the full clip, however, the president urged the audience to walk with him "and we're going to cheer on our brave senators and congressmen and women".—Agencies

King Charles honours Britain's war dead

LONDON: Britain's King Charles III on Sunday led commemorations for the nation's war dead, along with other senior members of the royal family including his son William and his wife Catherine.

The 76-year-old monarch, who is still undergoing treatment for an undisclosed cancer, laid the first wreath at a sombre ceremony at the Cenotaph memorial in central London after the traditional two-minute silence at 11am.

Queen Camilla and Catherine, now in remission after her own cancer diagnosis, watched from the balcony of the Foreign Office overlooking the memorial.

Crowds lined the Whitehall area of the capital as political leaders, including Prime Minister Keir Starmer, current and former members of the armed forces, and war veterans, paid their respects to British and Commonwealth soldiers killed in two world wars and other conflicts.

Around 10,000 armed forces veterans took part in a march-past, including around 20 who served in World War II.

Among those who took part was 101-year-old Sid Machin, one of the last survivors of the Burma (now Myanmar) campaign, who served as part of a special forces' unit.

Other members of the royal family including Prince William also laid wreaths. Prince Harry, 41, who is largely estranged from his family after quitting royal duties along with his wife Meghan in 2020, was not present.—AFP

Seven migrants die as boat sinks near Thai border

Vessel was carrying some 90 undocumented migrants from Myanmar when it capsized

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysian authorities have recovered at least seven bodies after a boat carrying 90 migrants capsized near the Thai border, a maritime agency official said on Sunday.

Officials believe the boat was carrying undocumented migrants who departed from Myanmar, part of a group of at least 300 people that had split between several vessels.

The boat that capsized near Thailand's Tarutao Island and just north of Malaysia's island resort of Langkawi was carrying some 90 people, Kedah state police chief Adzli Abu Shah told Malaysian media.

Romli Mustafa, director of the Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency (MMEA) in the northern states of Kedah and Perlis, said in a statement that three survivors were found on Sunday in the waters around Langkawi as well as six bodies, taking the overall death toll to seven.

At least 13 people have been rescued alive.

Romli said the bodies recovered on Sunday were of a girl and five women, without disclosing their nationality or ethnicity.

A body found on Saturday is believed to be of a woman from Myanmar's persecuted Rohingya minority, Adzli told the Bernama national news agency.

The search and rescue effort ended for the day and will resume on Monday, Romli added, saying it was possible more survivors or victims could be found at sea.

A MALAYSIAN Maritime Enforcement Agency official checks on a survivor rescued by a fishing boat, off the coast of Langkawi.—AFP

The boat likely went down three days ago, according to the state police chief.

Two other vessels, believed to be carrying some of the group of 300 migrants who had departed from Myanmar, have also been reported missing, Adzli was quoted as saying by the *Free Malaysia Today* news website.— AFP

US air traffic staffing shortages snarl thousands of flights

Air traffic control staffing issues are affecting 42 airport towers and delaying flights in 12 major cities

WASHINGTON: Major air traffic control staffing shortages snarled thousands of flights on Saturday as the government shutdown caused mounting travel woes and raised alarm among airline officials.

The Federal Aviation Administration said there were air traffic control staffing issues affecting 42 airport towers and other centres and delaying flights in at least 12 major US cities, including Atlanta, Newark, San Francisco, Chicago and New York. Flights crossing six different high-traffic areas were also facing delays.

Some 1,500 flights were cancelled and 6,000 flights were delayed on Saturday, compared with Friday when 1,025 were cancelled and 7,000 were delayed.

Airline officials privately said the number of delay programmes made it nearly impossible to schedule and plan many flights and expressed alarm about how the system would function if staffing issues worsen.

Flight reductions to increase

The FAA instructed airlines to cut 4 per cent of daily flights starting on Friday at 40 major airports because of air traffic control safety concerns. The shutdown, which has reached a record 39 days, has led to shortages of air traffic controllers who, like other federal employees, have not been paid for weeks.

Reductions in flights are mandated to rise to 6pc on Tuesday and then hit 10pc by November 14.

The air traffic absences prompted the FAA to impose ground delay programmes at nine airports on Saturday, with delays averaging 282 minutes for flights at Atlanta, one of the busiest US airports.

The cuts, which began on Friday morning, include about 700 flights from the four largest carriers: American Airlines, Delta Air Lines, Southwest Airlines and United Airlines.

The four airlines cancelled about the same number of flights on Saturday, under the FAA mandate, but were forced to cancel additional flights due to air traffic control staffing issues.

Earlier this week, FAA Administrator Bryan Bedford said 20pc to 40pc of controllers had not been showing up for work over the previous several days.

During a US Senate debate on Friday, Senator Ted Cruz blamed the shutdown for air traffic control concerns. Cruz, a Texas Republican who chairs the Senate Commerce Committee, said he has been told that since the shutdown started, pilots have filed more than 500 voluntary safety reports about mistakes made by air traffic controllers because of fatigue.

Talks to end shutdown

Senate Majority Leader John Thune said on Saturday that bipartisan talks to end the shutdown had taken a positive turn, but the workday ended with no deals announced. The Senate is to try again with a rare Sunday session.

During the government shutdown, 13,000 air traffic controllers and 50,000 security screeners have been forced to work without pay, leading to increased absenteeism. Many air traffic controllers were notified on Thursday that they would receive no compensation for a second consecutive pay period next week. US Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy said it was possible he could require 20pc cuts in air traffic if more controllers stop showing up for work. "I assess the data," Duffy said. "We're going to make decisions based on what we see in the airspace."

The Trump administration has cited air traffic control problems as Republicans try to pressure Senate Democrats to back what they call a "clean" government funding bill with no strings attached. Democrats blame the shutdown on a Republican refusal to negotiate over health insurance subsidies that will expire at the end of this year.—Reuters

Saudis hold firm on Palestine as Trump eyes expansion of Abraham Accords

DUBAI: US President Donald Trump has been talking up the prospects of Saudi Arabia agreeing to normalise ties with Israel, but it is unlikely to happen when Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman visits the White House this month.

The establishment of diplomatic relations between Israel and Saudi Arabia after decades of enmity could shake up the political and security landscape in the Middle East, potentially strengthening US influence in the region.

Trump said last month he hoped Saudi Arabia would "very soon" join other Muslim countries that signed the 2020 Abraham Accords normalising ties with Israel.

But Riyadh has signalled to Washington through diplomatic channels that its position has not changed: it will sign up only if there is agreement on a roadmap to Palestinian statehood, two Gulf sources told Reuters.

The intention is to avoid diplomatic missteps and ensure alignment of the Saudi and US positions before any public statements are made, they said. One said the aim was to avoid any confusion at or after the White House talks on Nov 18.

The Crown Prince, widely known as MbS, "is not likely to entertain any possible formalising of ties in the near future without at least a credible pathway to a Palestinian state", said Jonathan Panikoff, former deputy US national intelligence officer on the Middle East.

MbS is likely to try to use his influence with Trump to seek "more explicit and vocal buy-in for the establishment of a sovereign Palestinian state", said Panikoff, who is now at the Atlantic Council think tank in Washington.

Abraham Accords

The United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Morocco have already normalised ties with Israel under the Abraham Accords, and Trump has said he expects an expansion of the accords soon.

"We have a lot of people joining now the Abraham Accords, and hopefully we're going to get Saudi Arabia very soon," he said on Nov 5, without offering a timeline.

In a television interview broadcast on Oct 17, he said: "I hope to see Saudi Arabia go in, and I hope to see others go in. I think when Saudi Arabia goes in, everybody goes in."

The two Gulf sources said Riyadh had signalled to Washington that any move to recognise Israel must be part of a new framework, not just an extension of any deal.

For Saudi Arabia, recognising Israel would be more than just a diplomatic milestone. It is a deeply sensitive national security issue tied to resolving one of the regions oldest and most intractable conflicts.—Reuters

What is the COP30 climate summit, and why does it matter?

BELEM: While thousands of diplomats and climate experts are reaching Belem, in Brazil's Amazon, for COP30, which opens on Nov 10 and runs through Nov 21, what exactly happens at these annual summits and how significant the annual conference is for people across the world.

The annual conference is known as a COP, which stands for Conference of the Parties that signed the 1992 UN climate treaty. The treaty, called the U.N. Framework on Climate Change Convention (UNFCCC), committed countries to working together to fight climate change a problem they acknowledged all countries faced and was best tackled together.

The treaty also established the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, meaning the rich countries responsible for most of the planet-warming emissions bear a greater responsibility in solving the problem.

A VISITOR poses for a picture with the COP30 mascot, inside the Estacao das Docas, a tourist port area in Belem, Para State, Brazil.—AFP

The rotating presidency, now held by Brazil, sets the summit agenda and works through the year to rally governments toward shared action and goals. It then hosts the two-week summit, drawing global attention to the issue while giving national leaders a chance to swap ideas and hold one another accountable.

Over the years, the annual summits have become a major hub of geopolitical and financial discussion projecting the idea of a "global village" that welcomes all countries, civil society groups, businesses and financiers.

For many, this year's 30th climate summit marks as a full-circle moment.

Brazil had hosted the Rio Earth Summit where the UNFCCC treaty was signed 33 years ago. This year, the country insisted the event would return to its roots in acknowledging the worlds most vulnerable including indigenous groups, with some joining the talks. Brazil has asked countries to work on realizing past promises, such as a COP28 pledges to phase out fossil fuel use, rather than making new ones. COP30 is also the first to acknowledge failure in meeting the past goal of preventing warming above 1.5 degrees Celsius. Brazil opted to hold COP30 in the Amazon city of Belem hoping to symbolically underline the importance of world forests that remain targets for logging and industries including mining, farming and fossil fuel extraction.

Who are the main players?

Most national governments send teams to the talks. Often, countries speak together in groups with similar interests.

Some of the more prominent voices include the Alliance of Small Island States facing an existential threat from rising seas, and the G77+China bloc of developing countries.

Also influential are the Africa Group and the BASIC Group consisting of Brazil, South Africa, India and China. The U.S., which pledged in January to quit the Paris Treaty on climate change, has stepped away from its past leadership role. China, Brazil and others have stepped in to fill the void.

The sprawling COP campus is often a hive of activity, with campaigners trying to draw attention to their causes while corporations lobby policy change and seek business deals.—Reuters

Taliban disappointed by lack of invite

KABUL The Taliban regime expressed its disappointment on Sunday that it was not invited to the COP30 conference despite Afghanistan being one of the nations most vulnerable to climate change.

The 30th UN Climate Change Conference opens on Monday and is set to draw representatives from dozens of countries to Brazil.

Afghanistan's National Environmental Protection Agency (Nepa) expressed its "deep concern over the fact that, despite Afghanistan being one of the most climate-vulnerable countries, it has unfortunately not received an official invitation" to COP30.

Last year the Taliban government, which is currently only recognised by Russia, sent a delegation to COP29 -- but as a "guest" of host Azerbaijan rather than a party directly involved in the negotiations.

The Taliban authorities, which returned to power in 2021, believe that their diplomatic isolation should not prevent them from taking part in international climate talks.

"The exclusion of the Afghan people from the right to participate in this conference contradicts the principles of climate justice, global cooperation, and human solidarity," the Nepa statement said.

Afghanistan accounts for approximately 0.06 per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions and is one of the countries most vulnerable to some effects of climate change, according to scientists.

About 89 per cent of the population depends on agriculture for their survival, according to the UN.—AFP